

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-17. (Canceled).

18. (Currently Amended) A method for suppressing the formation of precipitates during or after the heat sterilization of a beverage in the process of producing a milk-added coffee beverage, comprising adding a strongly basic substance ~~and/or a basic amino acid~~ and from 0 to less than 0.14 wt% of sodium bicarbonate to a coffee component, mixing a milk component therewith and then heat sterilizing the mixture, provided that phosphate salts are excluded from the strongly basic substance.

19 (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the strongly basic substance and/or a basic amino acid is added before mixing the milk component with the coffee component and subsequently the coffee component is admixed with the milk component before the beverage is subjected to heat sterilization.

20. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein addition of the strongly basic substance and/or basic amino acid reduces the amount of emulsifier and/or thickening agent required.

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 20, wherein the total amount of emulsifier and thickening agent added is no greater than 1 wt%.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the pH of the milk-added coffee beverage product is 5.8-7.0.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein the strongly basic substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide.

24. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the amount of the strongly basic substance added is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

25.-26. (Canceled).

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 18, wherein sodium bicarbonate is added in an amount of no more than 0.14 wt% in addition to the strongly basic substance and/or the basic amino acid.

28. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 18, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the coffee component at ~~0-1~~1.08-10 wt%.

29. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 18, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the milk component at ~~0-1~~1.48-10 wt%.

30. (Currently Amended)) A milk-added coffee beverage containing at least one strongly basic substance selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide, ~~wherein the beverage does not contain sodium bicarbonate at an amount of more than 0.14 wt% in addition to from 0 to less than 0.14 wt% of sodium bicarbonate.~~

31.-32. (Canceled).

33. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30 ~~or 31~~, wherein the amount of the strongly basic substance or the basic amino acid in the beverage is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

34. (Currently Amended) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30 ~~or 31~~, which contains a coffee component at ~~0-1~~1.08-10 wt%.

35. (Currently Amended)) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30-~~or 31~~, which contains a milk component at ~~0-1~~1.48-10 wt%.

36. (Previously Presented) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 35, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

37. (Currently Amended) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 30-~~or 31~~, 33, 34, 35 or 36, wherein the milk added coffee beverage contains substantially no sweet components or is only lightly sweetened.

38. (New) A method for suppressing the formation of precipitates during or after the heat sterilization of a beverage in the process of producing a milk-added coffee beverage, comprising adding a basic amino acid to a coffee component, mixing a milk component therewith and then heat sterilizing the mixture.

39. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the basic amino acid is added before mixing the milk component with the coffee component and subsequently the coffee component is admixed with the milk component before the beverage is subjected to heat sterilization.

40. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein addition of the basic amino acid reduces the amount of emulsifier and/or thickening agent required.

41. (New) A method according to claim 40, wherein the total amount of emulsifier and thickening agent added is no greater than 1 wt%.

42. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the pH of the milk-added coffee beverage product is 5.8-7.0.

43. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the basic amino acid is at least one selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine and histidine.

44. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the amount of the basic amino acid added is 0.01-1 wt%.

45. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein sodium bicarbonate is added in an amount of no more than 0.14 wt% in addition to the basic amino acid.

46. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the coffee component at 0.1-10 wt%.

47. (New) A method according to claim 38, wherein the milk-added coffee beverage contains the milk component at 0.1-10 wt%.

48. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage wherein said beverage contains a basic amino acid but does not contain sodium bicarbonate at an amount of more than 0.14 wt%, and wherein the beverage is to be heat-sterilized and placed on the market in a hermetically sealed container.

49. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, wherein the basic amino acid is at least one selected from the group consisting of lysine, arginine and histidine.

50. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, wherein the amount of the basic amino acid in the beverage is 0.005-0.5 wt%.

51. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, which contains a coffee component at 0.1-10 wt%.

52. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, which contains a milk component at 0.1-10 wt%.

53. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 52, wherein the milk component is cow's milk.

54. (New) A milk-added coffee beverage according to claim 48, wherein the milk added coffee beverage contains substantially no sweet components or is only lightly sweetened.